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CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY AND THE NEW NORTHWEST.

FAR away in the Northwest, as far beyond St. Paul as St. Paul is beyond Chicago, stands Winnipeg, the capital of Manitoba, and the gateway of a new realm about to jump from its present state of trackless prairies, as yet almost devoid of settlement, to the condition of our most prosperous Western States. Here, bounded on the south by Dakota and Montana, west by the Rocky Mountains, north and east by the great Peace River and the chain of lakes and rivers that stretch from Lake Athabasca to Winnipeg, lies a vast extent of country, estimated to contain 300,000,000 acres, or enough to make eight such States as Iowa or Illinois. Not all of it is fertile it is true, yet it may be safely said that two-thirds of it are available for settlement and cultivation.

In fact, the extent of available land in these new countries is apt to be underestimated, for if the traveller does not see prairies waist deep in the richest grass, he is apt to set them down as barren lands, and if he crosses a marsh, he at once stamps it as land too wet for cultivation. Those, however, who remember the early days of Illinois and Iowa have seen lands then passed by as worthless swamps, now held at high prices as the best of meadow-land.

This is a land of rolling prairies and tablelands, watered by navigable rivers, and not devoid of timber.

Its climate is hardly such as one would select for a lazy man's paradise, for the winters are long and cold, and the summers short and fiercely hot, though their shortness is in some measure compensated for by the great length of the midsummer days. Nevertheless, it is a land where wheat and many other grains and root crops attain their fullest perfection, and is well fitted to be the home of a vigorous and healthy race. Manitoba, of which we hear so much now, is but the merest fraction of this territory, and, lying in the southeast corner, is as yet the only part accessible by rail.

Most of our ideas of this region are derived from travellers who traversed it in midwinter, toiling along wearily day after day on snow-shoes or with Esquimaux dogs and sleds, cold, hungry, and shelterless: no wonder that we have learned to think of it as an arctic region!

Listen to what Butler writes of it when about to start from Portage-la-Prairie for Edmonton in his first trip. (These opinions, however, were much modified afterward.) "A long journey lay before me: nearly 3000 miles would have to be traversed before I could reach the neighborhood of even this lonely spot itself, this last verge of civilization. The terrific cold of a winter of which I had heard, a cold so intense that travel ceases except in the vicinity of the forts of the Hudson Bay Company, a cold which freezes mercury, and of which the spirit registers 80° of frost—this was to be the thought of many nights, the ever-present companion of many days. Between this little camp fire and the giant mountains to which my footsteps were turned there stood in that long 1200 miles but six houses."

This was in 1870. Now hear what Mr. Anderson, another English traveller, writes in 1880, just ten years later: "From Poplar Point to Portage-la-Prairie the land seemed perfection—dry and workable soil, light but rich in the extreme, evidence the magnificent crops of wheat we passed. A farmer to whom I spoke shook his head and said: 'The black-birds are bad enough, but there's plenty for us all; in spite of them I shall have thirty-five bushels to the acre.' Portage-la-Prairie, which a few years ago was part of an uninhabited waste, is now a thriving

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ing little town, with a couple of hotels and half a dozen machine dépôts."

Over this vast region, and indeed all that lies between it and the Arctic Ocean, for two hundred years the Hudson Bay Company exercised territorial rights. Till within a few years it was practically unknown except as a preserve of fur-bearing animals; and prior to 1870 it was hard to find any information as to its material resources or its value. The Company discouraged every attempt that threatened to interfere with the fur-bearing animals or the Indians who trapped them; still it became known that some of this vast region was not utterly worthless for other purposes; the soil looked deep and rich in many places, and in the western part the buffalo found a winter subsistence, for the snows were seldom deep, and in the pure dry air and hot autumnal sun the grasses, instead of withering, dried into natural hay. The early explorers, too, had brought back reports of noble rivers, of fertile prairies, of great beds of coal, of belts of fine timber. But what cared the Company for these? The rivers, it is true, were valuable as being the homes of the otter, the mink, and other fur-bearing animals, and furnished fish for their employés, and highways for their canoes. For the rest they had no use. At last, in 1870, seeing that they could no longer exclude the world from these fertile regions, the Hudson Bay Company sold their territorial rights to Canada, which now began to see its way to a railroad across the continent, to link the colonies from Nova Scotia to British Columbia. The Company received in return a million and a half of dollars, a reservation of land around their forts, and one-twentieth of the lands within the fertile belt. It is not necessary for us to follow the quarrelling, the wire-pulling, the attempts to harmonize conflicting interests, the scandals worse than those of our *crédit mobilier*, that followed the attempts of the government to inaugurate this scheme. To the Pacific Railway at least one administration owed its downfall. Finally, in 1881, after public money to a vast amount had been expended on surveys, and some of the road actually constructed, a bargain was concluded with an association of capitalists, called, in the slang of the stock market, "a syndicate," to complete the undertaking. The syndicate agreed to complete a railroad of the standard gauge from Lake Nipissing, near the

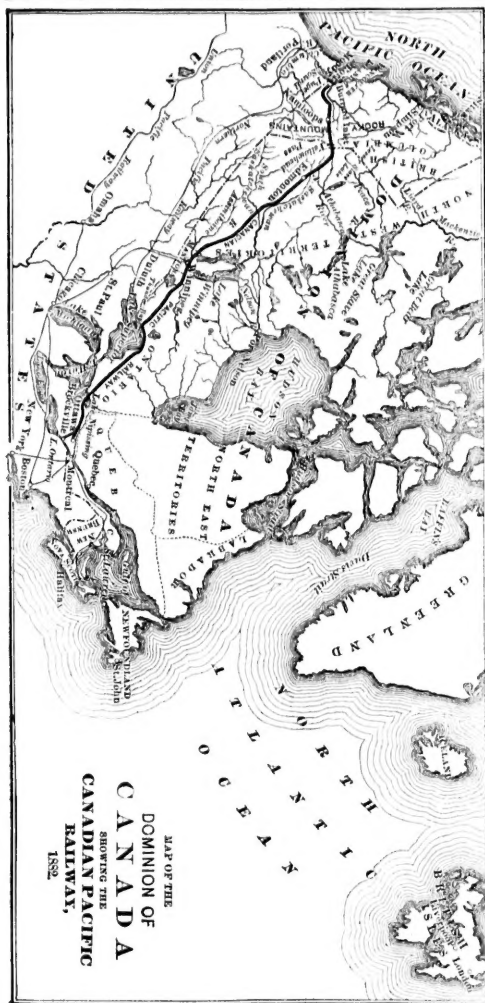
northeast shore of Lake Huron, to Port Moody, on Burrard Inlet, in British Columbia, nearly opposite the south end of Vancouver Island, by May 1, 1891, and to maintain and operate the same forever. In return they were allowed to charge certain tolls, had liberal exemptions from taxation, were given \$25,000,000 in cash, 25,000,000 acres of land, and about 700 miles of railroad already built or contracted for by the government, valued at about \$30,000,000 more.

In short, the government was only too glad to get clear of the whole scheme, and give a royal bounty to any one willing and able to finish it. It is said that \$3,000,000 had been spent on surveys alone, and that 12,000 miles of different routes had been actually surveyed with instrument and chain. No doubt the government hoped, by intrusting the enterprise to private hands, to hasten both the completion of the railroad and the settlement of the country, as it was manifestly to the interest of the syndicate that their lands should be sold and settled as rapidly as possible, which could hardly be done except as the road was built.

Now it is evident that the growth of this region will be rapid, probably more rapid, indeed, than that of our own Western States that lie beyond the lakes; for in them there had been a slow but steady increase of population from a comparatively early day, and when the railroads began to gridiron the country from the great lakes to the Rocky Mountains, the States east of the Missouri already possessed a considerable population.

In the new Northwest, however, we see a land that has remained isolated from the rest of the world, untrodden except by the Indian or the trapper, suddenly thrown open for settlement, and on terms as liberal as those offered by our government or land-grant railroads.

The Canadian Pacific Railway is already completed 150 miles west of Winnipeg, which is already connected with our Northwestern railroads, and it is hoped, not without reason, that another 500 miles will be completed toward the mountains the present year. To build two or even three miles a day across such a country as this division traverses would be no extraordinary feat in modern railroading. Branches, too, north and south, will be rapidly constructed, not to accommodate existing traffic, but to create it. Now it



seems as if nothing short of some financial panic, some gross blundering or stupidity, could delay the construction of the railroad, or check the flood of immigration that must surely pour in.

Can it be that, with the government Canada enjoys, one as free and fully as democratic as our own, the shadow of monarchy will delay the occupation of

this land by other races than that of the Briton?

Here we shall have a chance to see how Canadian enterprise compares with our own. The Northern Pacific Railway has its agents far and wide trying to induce settlers to purchase its lands and furnish traffic for its lines. The two railroads are not far apart, and the Canadians have quite as good, if not better, lands to offer. Will they be as energetic, as successful, as their cousins across the line?

The climate of this region is far from what one would expect from its northern latitude. While it can not be said to be entirely safe from early frosts as far north as Dunvegan, in latitude 56° , there is seldom any from the middle of May till September, and even the tender cucumber attains maturity. Wheat, barley, and vegetables ripen every season at the various posts along the Pearl River. Wheat ripens even as far north as Fort Simpson, in latitude 62° , while wheat and barley from the Lake Athabasca district took a medal at the Centennial. These crops, it is true, have been raised on the bottom-lands along the river, and though the table-lands on each side are several hundred feet higher, they are protected by that very elevation from those late and early frosts everywhere prevalent on low-lying bottom-lands.

The physical features of this region are noteworthy. The international boundary in latitude 49° traverses the divide between the waters flowing into the Gulf of Mexico and the Arctic Ocean. Here is a comparatively barren table-land elevated about 4000 feet above the sea, and swept in winter by the fiercest blizzards, those blinding storms when the air seems filled

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with the finest snow driven at hurricane speed by winds that penetrate an ordinary overcoat as if it were but muslin. Two hundred and fifty miles to the north the general level is 1000 feet lower; go yet 300 more, and the general elevation is but 1700 feet above sea-level, while the winter storms have lost much of their severity. On the other hand, the summits of the Rocky Mountains go on increasing in height from latitude 49° to latitude 52° , where from an altitude of 16,000 feet the summits of Mount Brown and Mount Hooker look down on the fertile plains at the sources of the Saskatchewan. Here a strange anomaly occurs. Near this point two of the lowest passes, the Yellowhead, with an elevation of 3760 feet, and the House Pass, but little higher, and but sixty miles apart, contain between them some of the loftiest summits of the range. So gradual is the ascent of the Yellowhead (or Tête-jaune) Pass that travellers approaching it from the east first become conscious of having passed the dividing ridge when they see the water flowing to the west. While this forms the best pass for a railroad, it is open to the objection that beyond it in British Columbia lies a wilderness of tangled mountains covered with dense forests of gigantic timber, through which the railroad must force its way. The valley of the Fraser, resembling a cleft made by some mighty sword, and seeming to bid defiance to the engineer, forms the only known route through this labyrinth of mountains. Here, however, so much work toward the construction of the railroad has already been done by the government that the route by this pass and river may be said to be fixed.

Three hundred miles to the north the great Peace River flows calmly through the range only 1800 feet above the sea, except at one point, where it boils for about ten miles through a rocky cañon, and even thus far north Butler found vegetation well advanced in May. To the west for about 300 miles across British Columbia no obstacle to a railroad exists, and here we shall some day see a Pacific Railway. Some reader may ask, "But what of the country to the north?" It is either covered by the great forest that stretches toward the Arctic Ocean, or lies open in what are called the barren lands.

The reindeer, the wood buffalo, and that relic of ages gone by, the musk-ox, sometimes stray down to Lake Athabasca from

these regions of the North, and where they make their home there can be little inducement for man to dwell.

Now let us look at the route and the distances to be traversed by this railroad.

	Miles.
From Brockville and Ottawa to Lake Nipissing	290
" Lake Nipissing to Thunder Bay	650
" Thunder Bay to Winnipeg	425
" Winnipeg to the Rocky Mountains	800
" Rocky Mountains to Kamloops	450
" Kamloops to Port Moody	220
" Winnipeg to Pembina (branch)	65
	2900

Of this the government has built or is building, and will turn over to the syndicate when the rest of the route is completed:

	Miles.
From Thunder Bay to Winnipeg	425
" Kamloops to Port Moody	220
" Pembina branch	65
	710

The 290 miles east of Lake Nipissing were already built, and were bought by the syndicate, so there remains for them just 1900 miles to build. From Lake Nipissing to Winnipeg for 1075 miles its route traverses a little-settled and comparatively unknown country, said to be rich in lumber and minerals, but with very little tillable land. For 800 miles from Winnipeg to the Rocky Mountains the country has been already described, nor can there be any doubt as to its rapid settlement or the early construction of new branches and other parallel railroads. Those who have crossed the continent by the route of the Union and Kansas Pacific Railroads will remember how rapidly one gets into an arid country after leaving the Missouri. Here it is quite different. The soil and climate are as good at the base of the mountains as at the Red River, and the rain-fall as abundant. It must be borne in mind, too, in speaking of this country, that wheat grown here fetches from seven to ten cents a bushel more than that grown south of the latitude of St. Paul. To the farmer this represents about two dollars per acre additional on an average crop—no small consideration when it costs no more for cultivation or harvesting.

From the Rocky Mountains to Port Moody almost the entire distance is through a labyrinth of densely timbered mountains, worthless as yet because inaccessible, but destined to grow in value as our Eastern pine becomes exhausted. Of the natural wealth of the northwest coast

it is hard to speak in measured terms, for in climate, in fertile soil, in fruit, in lumber, in coal, in fisheries of the finest salmon, it seems as if the best gifts of nature had been poured out with unstinted hand. Oregon, Washington Territory, and British Columbia form three sister states, closely resembling each other, yet each possessing some wealth of its own; but the greatest riches of coal and iron, so far as known, lie within the British Possessions.

A part of the grain crop of this new Northwest will have but 750 miles to go to reach tide-water on the Pacific; some of it has but 500 miles to reach lake navigation at Thunder Bay, on Lake Superior, and a railroad is projected from Winnipeg to Port Nelson, on Hudson Bay, a distance of 300 miles, whence to Liverpool it is some miles shorter than from New York. The bay is open for about four months, but the straits at its entrance are much obstructed by ice, and could not be depended on for more than three months of navigation, if even for that. Hence a crop would have to wait over one season for shipment by this route. But it matters little as to routes. When the wheat is grown, it will seek the best market by the cheapest route, without regard to flag or frontier.

As to the future of the Canadian Pacific Railway it is hard to predict. That it will serve the purpose for which it was built, namely, to settle up the country, and link the colonies in a closer union, is certain; that it will be profitable to operate is less so. The larger part of the eastern and western divisions traverse regions which must be slow of settlement, where for a long time the local traffic must be small, and though the through traffic will pass over them, that business is far smaller and less remunerative than is commonly supposed. Of the large dividends of the Union Pacific Railroad but a very small fraction is earned on the through business, and its amount is surprisingly small.

However, in length and in grades the Canadian route will compare favorably with any further south; and from the forests north of Lake Superior lumber will be carried to the central prairie regions, and thither also will be brought the fine coal of British Columbia, all of which will help to furnish local business to the less promising divisions, and with such grants of money, land, and finished road, it would seem as if there might be some dividends for the stockholders.

